

Christmas Trees and Candles Are Leading Causes of Fire in December

The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs (RIAFC) is urging Rhode Islanders to be extra careful this holiday season. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), real and artificial Christmas trees are the first items ignited in an estimated 210 home fires each year. On average, one in nine Christmas tree fires resulted in a death and electrical problems were factors in nearly half of all Christmas tree fires.

In addition, 13 percent of candle fires begin with holiday decorations, resulting in more than 15,000 home fires, 150 deaths, more than 1,200 injuries and estimated \$539 million in property damage. On average, fires caused by candles in the home are reported every 34 minutes.

The RIAFC offers the following tips for safety during the holidays:

- When decorating Christmas trees, always use lights that are designated for indoor use. Some lights are specifically for outdoor use.
- Always use lights and electrical cords that are UL approved.
- Do not use any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulbs.
- Connect no more than three strands of push-in bulbs and a maximum of 50 bulbs for screw-in bulbs.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed.
- Bring outdoor electrical lights inside after the holidays to prevent hazards and extend their life.
- When purchasing a live or cut tree, check for fresh, green needles.
- Choose a sturdy tree stand designed not to tip over.
- Keep a fresh tree watered; dry trees are a fire hazard. Dispose of the Christmas tree after four weeks.
- When purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled as fire-retardant.
- Make sure the tree is at least three feet away from any heat source, such as fireplaces and radiators.
- Try to position the tree near an outlet so that cords are not running long distances.

The Rhode Island Association of Fire Chiefs is a professional organization dedicated to improving efficiency, preparedness and emergency response time, to educating the public about fire safety and to providing a support system for Rhode Island fire chiefs, firefighters and emergency medical technicians in times of crisis.